

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0197
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 01034

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, MARR, LE, SY, XF
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: POSSIBILITIES OF SYRIAN MOVE TO
LITANI

REF: BEIRUT 1540

1. FOLLOWING LEONARD/MAYNES TELECON AND RECEIPT REFTTEL,
MISOFF MARCH 22 TALKED TO URQUHART (UNSEC) ABOUT
IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO HAVING SIILASVUO AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE WORK OUT WITH ISRAELIS SCHEDULE FOR WITHDRAWAL.
WE POINTED OUT THAT THIS MIGHT BE USEFUL IN HELPING
PERSUADE SYRIANS TO MOVE INTO AREA NORTH OF LITANI IN
ORDER TO ESTABLISH ORDER THERE AND CONTROL PALESTINIANS.
IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR SYRIANS TO MAKE SUCH MOVE IF
ISRAELIS WERE ACTUALLY BEGINNING TO WITHDRAW OR AT LEAST
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CLEARLY ON VERGE OF DOING SO. WHILE THERE OBVIOUSLY COULD
BE NO SPECIFIC LINKAGE, WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL
ELEMENT FOR SIILASVUO TO HAVE IN HAND WHEN HE WENT TO
DAMASCUS, A TRIP WE DEFINITELY THOUGHT HE SHOULD MAKE.

2. URQUHART ASSURED US THAT WITHDRAWAL WAS FIRST PRIORITY
ON SIILASVUO'S AGENDA NOW AND UN WAS THINKING ON PRE-

CISELY SAME LINES AS US. THEY WERE PREPARED TO HAVE SIILASVUO GO TO DAMASCUS IF IT APPEARED THAT WOULD BE USEFUL. MISOFF REPEATED THAT US BELIEVED SUCH TRIP WAS NECESSARY.

3. WE ALSO SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF WALDHEIM DIRECT APPROACH TO SYRIANS. URQUHART SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH SYG BUT HE PERSONALLY DID NOT FAVOR IT. HE THOUGHT THE MATTER WAS TOO TRICKY TO TRY TO DEAL WITH IN WRITTEN MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO ASSAD AND THAT IT WOULD NOT BE SATISFACTORY TO TRY TO HANDLE IT THROUGH SYRIAN UN MISSION AT PRESENT. (SYRIAN MISSION IS TECHNICALLY WITH-OUT PERMREP, ALTHOUGH ALLAF IS STILL HERE AND OPERATING AS HEAD OF MISSION IN SOME RESPECTS. URQUHART APPARENTLY DOES NOT THINK ALLAF WOULD BE PARTICULARLY SYMPATHETIC TO MESSAGE WALDHEIM WOULD BE TRYING TO CONVEY, AND THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO USE ALLAF AS CHANNEL.)

4. DURING A LUNCHEON DISCUSSION MARCH 22, POLCOUNS DESCRIBED TO THE ISRAELI MISSION'S DEPUTY PERMREP ELIAV OUR PRESENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION REGARDING THE SOUTHERN LEBANON PROBLEM. HE NOTED OUR CURRENT FOCUS ON THE ZONE BETWEEN THE LITANI RIVER AND THE RED LINE AND OUR CONCERN, WHICH WE WERE SURE THE ISRAELIS SHARE, TO ENSURE THAT NO VACUUM IS LEFT THERE TO THE BENEFIT OF

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THE PLO. IN DISCUSSING POSSIBLE MOVES TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, POLCOUNS SUGGESTED TO ELIAV THAT IT MIGHT BE VERY HELPFUL TO GENERAL SIILASVUO AS HE APPROACHES THE SYRIANS AND POSSIBLY OTHERS ON THIS ASPECT OF THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE PROBLEM TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS ON WITHDRAWAL MODALITIES HAVE MADE CONCRETE PROGRESS. SPECIFICALLY, EARLY ISRAELI ACTION TO COMMENCE WITHDRAWAL ACTIONS IN SOME VISIBLE WAY, OR AGREEMENT TO SOME KIND OF A TIMETABLE FOR COMMENCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL WOULD NATURALLY BE STRONG TALKING POINTS FOR SIILASVUO TO BE ABLE TO USE.

5. ELIAV IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED THAT IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE A "TIMETABLE" COULD BE DISCUSSED, DEPENDING ON SUCH DEVELOPMENTS AS PLO ACCEPTANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE, REINSERTION OF LEBANESE AUTHORITY INTO THE AREA BELOW THE LITANI AND CLEAR ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITARILY EFFECTIVE UN CONTROL OF THE AREA OF OPERATIONS. HE NOTED THAT SINCE 1967 THE ARABS HAVE BEEN FOND OF THE NOTION OF TIMETABLES FOR EVERYTHING. EVEN AFTER BEING URGED TO USE SOME IMAGINATION ON WHAT ISRAEL COULD OFFER TO ARM SIILASVUO AND THE UN IN COPING WITH THIS PROBLEM, ELIAV SAID HE

DOUBTED THERE WAS ANYTHING ISRAEL COULD SAY. HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT DISCUSSIONS OF SUCH MATTERS MUST BE HELD WITH WEIZMAN, AND WEIZMAN ONLY, IN JERUSALEM. THE MISSION IN NEW YORK IS NOT INFORMED OF GOI THINKING ON SUCH MATTERS AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS OF THESE POLICY PROBLEMS.

6. IN THE COURSE OF HIS DISCUSSION, HOWEVER, ELIAV COMMENTED: 1) THEY WOULD PREFER LEBANESE TO SYRIANS IN THE ZONE NORTH OF THE LITANI, EVEN IF THEY WERE ONLY

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES; 2) THE REPORTS OF IRAQI MOVEMENTS PROPERLY CAUSE CONCERN, BUT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE IRAQIS WILL INTERVENE IN A MILITARILY SIGNIFICANT WAY EXCEPT FOR MARGINAL SUPPLY OF THE PLO WHICH HAS ALWAYS CONTINUED; AND 3) HE UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEMS OF STARTING A REVERSE FLOW OF CHRISTIAN REFUGEES BACK INTO THE AREA SOUTH OF THE LITANI ARE OCCUPYING MANY OFFICIALS IN JERUSALEM.

7. CONCERNING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO MISSIONS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, ELIAV EXPRESSED HIS STRONG CONVICTION THAT THE US COULD HAVE DELAYED THE VOTES IN THE

SECURITY COUNCIL UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 20, WITHOUT
JEOPARDIZING THE OUTCOME WE SOUGHT. HE DENIED THAT THERE
WAS ANY SUBSTANTIAL MOMENTUM AMONG ARABS OR OTHERS THAT
WOULD HAVE OVERRIDDEN A US REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT; AS
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OF SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 18, ELIAV SAID, THEIR SOURCES
MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE ARABS HAD HALTED ALL EFFORTS TO
TAKE ANYTHING MORE THAN A PASSIVE SUPPORTING POSITION AS
LONG AS THERE WAS A CLEAR CALL FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. A
DELAY WOULD HAVE PERMITTED US TO CONSULT WITH PRIME
MINISTER BEGIN, THE ONLY MAN WHO COULD MAKE DECISIONS
AND EXPRESS ISRAELI POLICY AT THAT POINT. OUR FAILURE
TO GRANT THIS PERSONAL REQUEST OF THE PRIME MINISTER HAS
LEFT "DEEP SCARS". POLCOUNS RESPONDED TO THESE EMOTIONS
WITH A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE UNFOLDING TACTICAL
SITUATION AS WE SAW IT, INCLUDING OUR PUZZLEMENT AT THE
APPARENT LACK OF INSTRUCTIONS OR PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY BY
THE ISRAELI MISSION DURING CRITICAL PERIODS. ELIAV
ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY WERE NOT ALWAYS WELL INSTRUCTED,
BECAUSE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S TRANSIT STATUS, AND HE
ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WE HAD BEEN FORTHCOMING WHENEVER
THE ISRAELIS HAD APPROACHED US FOR INFORMA-
TION. BUT HE INSISTED THAT USUN DROVE THE TACTICS MORE
AGGRESSIVELY THAN NECESSARY; HE ACCEPTED THAT WE HAD BEEN
ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, HOWEVER, AS THE ISRAELIS
HAD CONFIRMED IN WASHINGTON. LEONARD

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